

# LESSON 3

## If God can provide, why do we have to ask?

**AS A MEMBER OF HIS FAMILY AND THIS BODY, WE ARE TO INQUIRE OF THE LORD REGARDING OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK HE IS DOING IN AND THROUGH THIS FELLOWSHIP.**

This week we address an important question that presents an opportunity for us to pursue the heart of God, as relates to provision in general, and specifically for our campaign. There are two dimensions to this question, which we will explore today:

1. Why do we have to ask Him, if He already knows the need?
2. Why does the public have to be asked to participate? Shouldn't they just want to contribute?

The problem arises when many of us buy into one of the great lies of American culture: you can make it on your own. Independence may ring true as a political concept, but there exists no scriptural basis for accomplishment apart from the "life-sap" of Christ. Indeed, to the contrary.<sup>1</sup>

Such purposeful dependence marks the maturing disciple of Christ.<sup>2</sup> The curious convergence of humility and initiative reveals an inquisitive heart that longs to know the deep things of God, and then to act on them in faith.



### **KEY CONCEPT: Asking teaches supplication.**

Translated in scripture as a request or petition, supplication simply means you are asking God for, or to do, something. The use of this word in Philippians 4:6 directly connects our petitions to our conscious choice to be grateful and not anxious. James 4 goes even further and shows that the motive behind our asking carries great weight and affects the outcome. The message in these and many other verses is clear. The Father is not put off by our asking; to the contrary, He desires it and He knows and takes into account our motivation in asking.

Asking God for help – be it insight, answers, involvement, practical assistance, protection - puts our focus on His power and strength and takes our eyes off the distraction(s) of the enemy. Scripture teaches us that Satan distracts, divides, and destroys.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the spiritual battle we wage<sup>4</sup> takes on new energy when we consider the great responsibility we share in managing God's resources in our physical world.



### **DISCUSSION:**

- a) How do we learn to ask for things, without becoming selfish in the process?
- b) Share and celebrate faith-inspiring examples of having asked God for something specific – be it healing, salvation, provision, jobs, intervention, favor, opportunity, etc. – where He showed His power and confirmed His love for you.

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### KEY CONCEPT: Asking teaches submission.

Because we believe this vision is God's will, then we must equally believe He knows how and when to release all the necessary wealth and expertise needed order to accomplish it. As we've already established, His resources are entrusted to us to manage; they are not ours to "own" and thus we submit to His ownership.<sup>5</sup>

Inherent to true submission are sub-themes of patience, deference, and expectation.<sup>6</sup> It can be summed up like this: "I think I know how this need is going to be met, and I have an idea of how I want to proceed, but I willingly defer to His plan, as revealed and confirmed through His Word and through those under whom I serve."

In the context of a financial campaign, leaders must engage believers to fund God's work; when we do, we present the Body with an opportunity to serve God more fully as they submit to earthly authority. When leaders earn the confidence and support of those who would follow, momentum builds and hearts respond.



### DISCUSSION: What does submission look like with respect to our church campaign?

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### KEY CONCEPT: Asking teaches surrender.

God wants our hearts, not our stuff.

The response of the rich young ruler<sup>7</sup> shows that our affection for material possessions can easily supplant a desire to follow Christ. At the core of this issue is the question of surrender: does what I hold onto bring greater fulfillment to my life, compared to what I gain by giving it up?

Just as the positive consequences of a fully surrendered life are clear, so too are the opposite. By definition, idolatry takes its form as anything that displaces the Father on the throne of our hearts, often revealed in our deep yearnings and our treasures. Resources withheld, be they items or fortunes or abilities, translate into missed opportunities for individuals and for the church as a whole. Limited or untapped resources reduce Kingdom impact rather than fueling the momentum needed to bring about the things near to God's heart.

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### DISCUSSION:

- a) What has God called you to surrender – in the past, or presently?
- b) Are you even asking Him to show you? What does that tell you?

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### PERSONAL / HOUSEHOLD APPLICATION

#### DISCUSS

What does “asking” look like for you/your household? Are you really asking, or is it more like telling God what you want to do, and then convincing yourself that He approves?

#### DECIDE

Determine to “wait upon the Lord” and discern what submission and surrender need to look like in your life. Becoming mature means changing, but never with the goal of being evident to, and thus receiving the worldly approval of, others. Rather, bear the fruit of generous works in your church and community.

#### DO!

Count the cost. Submit to God’s principles and honor your leaders in specific, overt ways. Make a list of things or time or talent that you can surrender – to a family member or neighbor in need, to Goodwill, to your campaign.

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- 1 John 15:5
  - 2 Phil 4:13
  - 3 John 10:10
  - 4 Eph 6:12
  - 5 Psalm 24:1
  - 6 Psalm 27:14, Isaiah 40:31
  - 7 Mark 10:17